

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS STUDENTS HOUSING PROVISION
FOR OFF-CAMPUS LIVING IN MALAYSIA

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DEDICATION

This piece of work is dedicated to all members of my “beloved family” my pride.



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ABSTRACT

It has long been recognized in many pieces of literature that there has been a significant increase in demand for higher education (HE) as a result of which higher education institutions (universities) are experiencing tremendous growth in student population. In the last two decades, enrolment has not been corresponding with student housing provision which makes universities incapacitated to accommodate the growing student population. This generates striking student demand for alternative housing in the neighbourhoods' private rental market. In many countries, private housing developers are not actively pulled up in the provision of student housing and in Malaysia, the situation is not different. Student housing is an entity in housing studies which researchers relegated to the background. This may not be unconnected to the perception that it has been a complete responsibility of institutions thereby has relative fewer problems in terms of financing, quality and provision of infrastructure facilities and services. Similarly, in Malaysia there are little research conducted on student housing provision and this research will add to the research of its kind. The methodology adopted in this study was pure qualitative research approach, expert interviews were the research method used for data collection. Data analysis was conducted using Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software [CAQDAS], NVivo version 10. The research found that universities and the private rental market are the providers of student housing; found also some drivers for student housing provision such as government policies, finance, land, enrolment and hostel capacity. It was found that macro private housing developers are not very active in the provision of student housing for obvious reasons, the research investigated factors influencing the provision of student housing and it was found that significant factors hindering provision are government policies, finance, land issues, cost of managing, student demand and proceeds. Inevitably, considering students' population growth, the inability of government or universities to provide adequate student housing and non-participation of macro-housing developers, the problems will be exacerbated in the future and will not be encouraging to educational development.

ABSTRAK

Sejak sekian lama, kajian-kajian literatur lepas telah mengenalpasti terdapat peningkatan ketara terhadap permintaan untuk pendidikan tinggi (HE) yang disebabkan oleh peningkatan populasi pelajar yang luar biasa. Dalam tempoh dua dekad yang lepas, pendaftaran pelajar adalah didapati tidak sepadan dengan bilangan kediaman pelajar dimana ianya telah menjadikan universiti tidak mampu untuk menampung populasi pelajar sedia ada. Ini telah mewujudkan permintaan mendesak pelajar untuk mencari kediaman alternatif di kawasan sekitar melalui sewaan persendirian. Dikebanyakan negara, pemaju perumahan swasta didapati tidak begitu aktif dalam penyediaan kediaman pelajar dan di Malaysia, keadaannya juga adalah serupa. Secara umum, kediaman pelajar adalah salah satu entiti dalam kajian berkaitan perumahan yang kurang ditumpukan oleh para penyelidik. Ini mungkin disebabkan oleh tiada hubungan dengan persepsi bahawa ianya adalah menjadi tanggungjawab institusi-institusi pengajian ini sepenuhnya, justeru institusi-institusi ini menghadapi masalah dari segi pembiayaan, kualiti, penyediaan kemudahan dan juga perkhidmatan. Persamaannya, di Malaysia tidak ada kajian yang dijalankan mengenai penyediaan kediaman pelajar dan kajian ini adalah suatu percubaan yang pertama seumpamanya. Kaedah yang digunakan dalam kajian ini adalah pendekatan penyelidikan kualitatif tulen, dan temubual pakar dimana ianya merupakan metod kajian yang digunakan untuk pengumpulan data. Analisis data telah dijalankan menggunakan analisis data kualitatif komputer software (CAQDAS), versi NVivo10. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa universiti dan sewaan persendirian adalah penyedia kepada kediaman basi perumahan pelajar; juga di dapati bahawa peruntukan perumahan untuk pelajar adalah bergantung kepada polisi kerajaan, sumber kewangan, tanah, bilangan pendaftaran dan kapasiti asrama. Kajian menyimpulkan bahawa pemaju perumahan swasta didapati tidak aktif dalam penyediaan kediaman pelajar disebabkan oleh sebab-sebab yang dinyatakan, kajian turut melihat kepada faktor yang mempengaruhi penyediaan kediaman pelajar dan didapati bahawa faktor-faktor penting yang menghalang penyediaan tersebut adalah dasar kerajaan, kewangan, isu tanah, kos pengurusan, bilangan pelajar dan hasilnya. Perkara yang tidak boleh diketepikan adalah seperti mengambilkira pertambahan populasi pelajar, ketidakupayaan kerajaan atau universiti untuk menyediakan kediaman pelajar yang mencukupi dan ketiadaan penyertaan pemaju perumahan makro dari pemaju swasta, akan menyebabkan masalah ini menjadi bertambah buruk dimasa-masa hadapan dan ianya turut akan merencatkan pembangunan dalam bidang pendidikan.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In recent years, Malaysia Higher Education Institutions (HEI) have been experiencing high growth in student population as enrolment increases. Student enrolment in higher education institutions has been increasing tremendously especially in the last two decades (Muslim, Karim, & Abdullah, 2012a; Muslim, Karim, & Abdullah, 2013b, Khozaei, Ayub, Hassan, & Khozaei, 2010a & Omar, Abdullah, Yusof, Hamdan, Nasrudin, & Abdullah, 2011). Some studies confirmed increased in student enrolment in HEIs in Malaysia which outrun the available student housing that necessitated many students to depend on the private housing market for their accommodation alternative. According to Muslim *et al.*, (2012a), universities in Malaysia provided student housing facilities generally are not adequate, and students enrolment every year exceeds the available university student housing. A certain proportion of the student population is accommodated in the university housing system while other students rent in the private housing market. Similarly, Omar *et al.*, (2011) observed, in Malaysia, most of the public and private universities continued to undergoing the extraordinary growth in enrolment, while construction of students housing options fell precipitously. In line with these scenarios, Karpinski (2014) explained, in Malaysia, it has been a common phenomenon for students to rent accommodation in the off-campus due to increasing students' population and inadequacy of universities student housing.

Similarly, it was reported that some Malaysia universities have been receiving increasing students' enrolment each year that is not congruent to housing provision, causing constraints on the student residential facilities that make it not enough to accommodate the entire student (Muslim *et al.*, 2012a, Ja'afar, 2012 & Karpinski, 2014). Therefore, many students have to rent off-campus residential facilities in the

private housing market on their own for their housing alternative. Thus Muslim *et al.*, (2012a) conclude, the upsurge in student population has led to challenges for student housing provision in many universities in Malaysia as a result of the continuing expansion and rising student numbers.

Many studies testified that, in the last three decades, colleges of higher learning have been experiencing high growth in student population as enrolment increases. Student enrolment in the HEIs is increasing tremendously all over the world more especially in the UK, USA, Ireland, China, India and Malaysia (Muslim *et al.*, 2012a; Muslim *et al.*, 2013b; Ong, Petrova, & Spieler, 2013; Onwong'a, 2012; Zaransky, 2006; Powley, 2014; Rugg, Rhodes, & Jones, 2000; Garg, Gupta, & Jha, 2014; Garmendia, Coronado, & Urena, 2011; Kenna, 2011; Khozaei *et al.*, 2010a). This was supported by LaSalle (2012) and Powley (2014) that globally, student number has increased, from 98 million in 2000 to 165 million in 2011 and student enrolment are postulated to increase by 32 million over the next ten years. Savills World Research (2013) reported, by 2025 the global number of HEIs students, are anticipated to swell-up to 263 million. Indeed, these have shown higher education has been rapid and steadily growing in the world especially in the last two decades where many young men were finishing high schools and seeking placement (applying) every year in HEIs.

Despite this demographic growth of students in HEIs, provisions of housing facilities are not congruent to the population growth, most of the students could not find housing accommodation in the HEIs housing system thus, had to find housing accommodation in the private market (Garmendia *et al.*, 2011; Go global, 2014; Davidson, 2013; Muslim *et al.*, 2012a; Ong *et al.*, 2013; Nimako & Bondinuba, 2012 & 2013; The Guardian, 2010; Rugg *et al.*, 2000; Gopal, 2008; Alaka, Pat-Mbano, & Ewulum, 2012 & Zaransky, 2006). It has been a tradition of many HEIs the enrolment is much higher than their available housing facilities for the students therefore, accommodate a small segment (20–30%) of the total student population, while majority of the students will not get housing accommodation in the HEIs housing system (Ong, 2013; Alaka *et al.*, 2012; Ong *et al.*, 2013; Nimako & Bondinuba, 2012; & Omar *et al.*, 2011). This rapid student population growth causes constraints on the HEIs student housing facilities in many parts of the world including Malaysia because it is increasingly becoming difficult for HEIs to provide housing accommodation for all students and this necessitates many other students to scout for alternative housing where opportunities exist outside the campus in private housing market.

1.2 Background of study

Population growth is one of the determinants for higher education demand as well as establishing new and or expanding the existing institutions in many countries. Malaysia population has been steadily growing from 1957 to date, for instance, in 1957 the country's population was 7.3 million; the population doubled to the figures of 13.3 million and 27.0 million by 1980 and 2008 respectively (Abdullahi & Aziz, 2011). Similarly, according to Population Reference Bureau (PRB) (2017), the population of Malaysia in 2017 stands, at 31.6 million and indicated that school-age cohort 25 years old and below constituted 37% of the Malaysian total population. This by implications signifies the possibilities of similar high increase in the demand for higher education as postulated by Omar *et al.*, (2011).

Many studies in both developed and developing countries have shown HEIs students' enrolment has been increasing especially in the last two decades. For instance, studies in some Asian countries confirmed the tremendous increase in HEIs enrolment, studies in Malaysia like that of Khozaei *et al.*, (2010a), Khozaei, Hassan, & Razak (2011), Muslim *et al.*, (2012a), Muslim, Karim, & Abdullah (2012b), Muslim, Karim, Abdullah, & Ahmad (2013a), Muslim *et al.*, (2013b), Omar *et al.*, (2011) & Abdul Aziz, Siong, Tin, Hamzah, & Abdullah (2011) while Garg *et al.*, (2014) in India. Similarly, studies in some parts of the world testified an increase in students' enrolment, such includes studies in Nigeria by Amole (2012), Alaka *et al.*, (2012), Pat-Mbano, Alaka, & Okeoma (2012), Hammad, Musa, Rishi, & Ayuba (2013) and Olufemi (2014); in Ghana: Nimako & Bondinuba (2012 & 2013); Donaldson, Benn, Campbell, & Jager (2014) in South Africa and Oginga (2013) & Onwong'a (2012) in Nairobi, Kenya.; Rugg *et al.*, (2000) and Kenna (2011) in the United Kingdom and Ireland respectively; furthermore, Ong *et al.*, (2013), Li, Sheely, & Whalen (2005) and Zaransky (2006) studies are in the United State of America. In addition some, periodical news reported similar on student enrolment increase like Go-global Investment, Financial Time (F.T.), Residential Estate News, The Guardian, The Telegraph, to mention but a few indicated tremendous increases in HEIs enrolment.

On the students' enrolment account, Omar *et al.*, (2011) stated, in Malaysia, there are approximately a total of 1.2–1.5 million students in 2009 and expected to increase in some years to come, as they expected 50% of the Malaysian youth (18–30 year olds) would gain access to HEI. These entire scenarios are by implication,

indicating a commensurate increase in pressure on the existing HEIs facilities and a tremendous increase in student housing demand. Despite this growth, of students in HEIs, provisions of housing facilities are not commensurate to the growth of enrolment, especially in the last decade. Due to the insufficiency of HEIs student housing, some students were compelled to rent houses in off-campus in HEI neighbourhoods (Karpinski, 2014, Muslim et al., 2012a & Ja'afar, 2012).

Malaysia has placed internationalisation as one of the key thrusts in transforming higher education to be able to compete with other global higher education providers. For Malaysia, to achieve its aim of becoming an international education hub by 2025, targeted to have 250,000 international student enrolments into the country's universities (MOE Malaysia, 2014). According to Abdul Aziz *et al.*, (2011) in the years of 2009 & 2010, Malaysian universities recorded 80,750 & 86,919 international student enrolments respectively, with a 7.6% increase. Similarly, between 2015–2017 recorded 151,979; 170, 068 and 172,886 international students toward attracting 250,000 international students into the country to achieving its aim as an international education hub by 2025 (MOHE, 2017).

Table 1.1: University students' enrolment from 2009 – 2017 in Malaysia
Source: Ministry of Higher Education (2018)

University	Year								
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Public	437,420	460,780	508,256	521,793	560,359	563,186	540,638	532,049	538,555
Private	484,377	541,629	428,973	454,616	484,963	493,725	580,928	695,026	565,852
Total	821,797	1,002,409	937,229	976,409	1,045,322	1,056,911	1,121,566	1,227,075	1,104,407

Therefore, Malaysia will be an emerging contender in the global international education providers by attracting international students. Likewise, Muslim *et al.*, (2013b) and Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia [MOHE] (2011) reported that the students' enrolment in Malaysian HEIs is increasing steadily where in 2010 the total students' population reached 1.134 million and expected to reach 1.5 and 1.8 million by 2015 and 2017 respectively. According to MOHE (2017) total enrolment for both public and private universities in 2017 stand at 1.1 million students. Furthermore, **Table 1.1** justified the steady growth in Malaysian universities enrolment. The growth of students' population couple with sufficient shortfalls created by universities student

housing, pushed many students to scout for housing alternative in universities neighbourhood this will, obviously increase the tempo for the student housing demand.

1.3 Statement of research problems

Malaysia population has been steadily growing from 1957 to date. It shows that in 1957 the population was 7.3 million and grew to 31.6 million in 2017 with 37% of it is school age cohort (Abdullahi & Aziz, 2011 & PRB, 2017). This led, to progressive demand and growth of institutions across the country as Muslim *et al.*, (2012a) put, in the past two decades, Malaysia, has witnessed tremendous changes in the higher education scenario, one of the changes observed, is the acceleration towards mass education to absorb the teeming population. Similarly, it was reported that students enrolment in Malaysia HEIs in 2009 was 1.5 million students and rose to 1.8 million in 2017 (Omar *et al.*, 2011 & MOHE, 2017). This growth in student enrolment, has increased demand and pressure, on the existing facilities and derived more demands for learning spaces, residential facilities, recreational and other supporting facilities. The provisions of adequate student housing are equally important, but the reality is institutional student houses are grossly inadequate, the students have no other choice than to seek for housing accommodation elsewhere close to their campuses where available (Omar *et al.*, 2011, Gopal, 2008, Hubbard, 2009, Grimm, 1993 Garmendia *et al.*, 2011 & Kenna, 2011).

Students population is the main target for the establishment of an institution and other supporting facilities such as student housing. The growing student demand for housing has a significant impact on the decision by an institution to build student housing. To some extent “economic meltdown” of many countries, coupled with high growth in HEIs enrolment, increasingly making it difficult for institutions to construct more housing units to sufficiently match with and provide housing accommodation for all students, therefore the on-campus students housing has remained grossly inadequate (Powley, 2014; Ong, 2013; Hammad *et al.*, 2013; Stevenson & Askham, 2011; Garmendia *et al.*, 2011; Hubbard, 2009; Zaransky, 2006; Gopal, 2006 & Varghese, 2001). In line with this, it has been noticed that most HEIs with traditional housing facilities only accommodate small proportion (20–30%) of their total students’ population (Powley, 2014, Muslim *et al.*, 2012b; Kenna, 2011; Goglobal, 2014; The Telegraph, 2013 & 2014; Alaka *et al.*, 2012; The Guardian, 2010; Zaransky,

2006, & Winston & Anchors, 1993) therefore, many students have to go to the private housing market.

The issue of the off-campus student rental housing provision has been a challenge of long-standing but increasing concern in Malaysia. The fact is, many campuses of public and private universities in Malaysia and in many other countries, continued to face the extraordinary growth in enrolment, while construction of on-campus housing options fell precipitously (Omar *et al.*, 2011). Similarly, Huston, Jadevicius & Minaei (2015) concurred with and presented, construction of university student housing has not kept pace with a rapid expansion of the universities. The inability of the universities to expand their student housing capacity to adequately match with the enrolled student population has increased the demand for student housing in the private sector market, where the students are obliged to look for private housing around their campuses neighbourhoods (Muslim *et al.*, 2012b, Kenna, 2011 & Zaransky, 2006).

Students renting accommodation in the private sector market, in some cases, are at the disadvantage because they find it difficult to get housing accommodation in the HEI's neighbourhood especially when the renting houses are scarce. It has been reported, by many scholars, most off-campus student houses provided by the private sector market, are either scarce or rather are not purposely built students houses, lack sufficient infrastructure facilities and are deficient in meeting the requisite minimum standards that make them habitable for a healthy and comfortable living for contemporary students (Hubbard, 2009, Yusuff, 2011, Stevenson & Askham, 2011 & Garmendia *et al.*, 2011). Huston *et al.*, (2015) reported, good student housing is scarce or else is expensive and the alternative houses are haphazard and poor in quality not renovated to fit students habitation. Such, herculean situation, has been described by Muslim *et al.*, (2012b) that in Malaysia students are often forced into the neighbourhood that is either not enough renting houses to meet the demand or not enough housing that meets the safety standards to be considered eligible for student occupancy.

Being most of the houses students are renting in the off-campus are not purposely built for students, are family residential converted into students housing, therefore, lack sufficient requisite facilities for students living. In this regard, Muslim *et al.*, (2012a) described living in off-campus as a situation where students are necessitated to live in family housing like 'apartment, studio flats, condominium and

terrace, detached and semi-detached houses'. This is more common, in areas where there are no purposely built students houses, students depend on any housing type readily available for them. Onwong'a (2012) in a study in Nairobi, Kenya found, that there were quite a number of private hostels in the neighbourhood with the majority of them (70%) being converted from family residential houses to hostels and only 30% were designed as student hostels. These show that as students flown, into the HEI neighbourhood scouting for housing, any type of available housing will be used, hence there is no readily available purposely build student housing. Getting houses for rent in the private market by students in HEI towns will be difficult; because in some cases private housing for rent is not sufficient in supply (Muslim *et al.*, 2012a, Omar *et al.*, 2011 & Khozaei *et al.*, 2010a). Consequently, these are serious challenges not only to students but to institutions and government to find solutions for gauging student housing shortage, healthy living environment and comfort for achieving the education mission.

Similarly, at the global level, there is progressive growth and demand for higher education following the unprecedented growth in the youth demography. Higher education has been growing rapidly in both developing and developed countries especially in the last few decades where many young people are graduating from high schools and gaining access to HEIs. In spite of this growth, the provision of students' housing is not matching with the growth which led to the constraints and stretching the existing HEIs housing facilities. As Ong *et al.*, (2013) put it, the increase of university students; sideways with the expansion of universities have made the provision of student housing a challenge for universities. The residential real estate news of the World Property Journal, also wrote in their 4th June 2014 edition, many HEIs cities have sufficient student housing 'shortfalls'. In many HEIs there is a significant deficit in student housing that compelled many students to rent residential quarters outside their campuses.

Furthermore, there are few studies discussed on student housing provision for off-campus living in Malaysia as the student housing provision in the rental market sector "have been little explored" (Hulse, Burke, Ralston, & Stone, 2012). It appears some of the previous studies will not be considered to have focused on student housing provision in Malaysia. Most of the studies are on students housing satisfaction like that of Khozaei *et al.*, (2010a), Khozaei, Hassan, & Khozaei (2010b), Muslim *et al.*, (2012b & 2013a); students well-being studies of Muslim *et al.*, (2012a & 2013b); students

housing perception by Khozaei, Amole, Hassan, & Khozaei (2010c) & Ong (2013); Hostel Management System by Ja'afar (2012); studentification impacts by Jaffar, Ludin, & Sabri (2012) and Impacts of Off-Campus Students housing of Omar *et al.*, (2011). Therefore, unlike previous researches that focused on student housing satisfaction, students well-being, student housing perception and management, this research explored student housing provision in Malaysia identified as the research gap. These, of course, motivated the study on student housing provision for the off-campus living in Malaysia. It has been a major concern as it possesses challenges in ensuring private housing developers participation in the provision of student housing is encouraged, in order to supplement the inadequate residential infrastructure provided by the HEIs for off-campus living students hence universities cannot provide everything.

Subsequently, with these scenarios, this research intends to study the existing student housing provision practice and explore particularly on the provision for off-campus living in Malaysia. Consequently, universities cannot adequately provide accommodation to all students and the responsibility has been shifting solely to the private sector directly or indirectly, as Ismail & Sulaiman (2004) term it “formally and informally” in the structure of housing provision. The needs for an effective and conducive student housing facility for HEIs students cannot be overemphasised due to the fact, that students are expected to be in a sound state of mind to excel in their academic endeavours which can be achieved by a good student housing system (Aluko, 2011).

1.4 Research questions

- (1) How is the structure of university students housing provision in Malaysia?
- (2) What are the drivers for university student housing provision in Malaysia?
- (3) Why are private housing developers not very active in student housing provision in Malaysia?

Qualitative research method of data collection and analysis was used to answer all these developed research questions.

1.5 Aim of the research

The aim of this research is to study university students' housing provision for off-campus living in Malaysia in the perspective of public and private housing developers, as a basis for identifying problems associated with it and to develop a framework for university students housing provision for off-campus living.

1.6 Objectives of the research

To satisfy the research questions and the aim, the following objectives were developed in order to answer the research questions and to achieve the aim: -

- (1) To study the existing structure of university student housing provision in Malaysia;
- (2) To study the drivers for student housing provision in universities for off-campus students in Malaysia;
- (3) To investigate factors influencing universities and private housing developers in students housing provision.

1.7 Scope and limitation

The research was limited to the study of student housing provision in Malaysia with the view of identifying factors influencing student housing provision by universities and private housing developers. Previous researches explored on other aspects of student housing like service quality satisfaction, well-being, perception and management, however, the scope of this research focused, on the provision of student housing with emphasis to off-campus living in Malaysia which determined the factors influencing the provision.

The research sources of data are from public and private universities as well as from macro (large-scale) and micro (small-scale) private housing developers. Although, there were a number of universities and private housing developers that could have provided vital information on student housing provision but for the purpose, of convenience and time constraint, only four universities and two private housing developers were selected to participate in the interview to generate the data.

This indeed followed the qualitative research nature of small-scale sample size for data collection which is not aimed, at producing results from quantitative representation as suggested, by Creswell (2014), Ritchie (2003) and Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam (2003).

1.8 Significance of the research

Following the growth of universities enrolment, coupled with their inability to provide adequate accommodation for the enrolled students, the research is significant in the following: -

1.8.1 Literature and academia

Basically, the goal of every academic research is not only to find solutions to observed problems but also to contribute to the body of knowledge in a particular field of study. In the cause of literature review, it has been realised, in the available work of literature, little research was conducted on student housing provision in Malaysia. Therefore, this research on student housing provision provided an empirical study which added to the body of literature on the subject matter in Malaysia.

1.8.2 Ministry of Education

The research is potential to the Government/ Ministry of Education, especially, when private housing developers participated in the student housing provision. In turn, the cost burden of student housing provisions being relieved off on the Ministry and the limited budgetary allocation for the ministry will instead be used on academic core areas to provide more classrooms, laboratories, workshop, and library. This will, enhance and facilitate the development of education in the country and the realization of the educational policies and goals.

There is a tendency for creating a reciprocal relationship between the ministry and private housing developers which will likely bring private participation in educational development as stakeholders subsequently the government will be relieved off especially in non-core academic areas. It also facilitates, public-private-

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